Published quarterly by the Robinson Jeffers Committee of Occidental College, 1600 Campus Road, Los Angeles, California 90041. Editor: Dr. Robert J. Brophy, Department of English, California State College at Long Beach, 6101 E. 7th, Long Beach, California 90840

Robinson Jeffers Newsletter

ISBN: 0300-7936

Number 74 November 1988

CONTENTS

Subscription: $4.00 per year. Charge for backfile: $75.00
Address subscriptions to: Tyrus G. Harmsen
Occidental College
1600 Campus Road, Los Angeles, CA 90041

NEWS AND NOTES

Arundel Press of Los Angeles is preparing an edition of SONGS AND HEROES, twenty-two early unpublished poems by Robinson Jeffers from the Special Collections Library, California State University, Long Beach.

James Karman is editing a collection of articles on Jeffers for the series, "Critical Essays on American Literature" from G. K. Hall (Boston).

All who are interested in Jeffers will welcome the publication this summer of THE COLLECTED POETRY OF ROBINSON JEFFERS, Volume I, edited by Tim Hunt, and published by Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 94305. The first volume covers work of 1920-1928. Three additional volumes are projected, with completion scheduled for late 1992.

Tyrus G. Harmsen has edited and printed at the Tiger Press a miniature book, JEFFERS AT WORK, by Una Jeffers--an excerpt from a letter telling of Jeffers' desk at Tor House and the manuscript of TAMAR. Available from Dawson's Book Shop, 535 N. Larchmont Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90005, $15.00.

CORRIGENDUM: "Una Jeffers Correspondent: Letters to Rudolph Gilbert, 1937-47" (RJN 73:3-15) should read "1937-44". The last three post-cards on page 15 were to Mr. Willis, although only one had a salutation to him.

ABSTRACTS

"THE THUNDER OF THE WINGS": THE SONNETS OF ROBINSON JEFFERS.
Moskop, Susan Therese, M.A. University of Mississippi, 1988.
Director: Michael Dean

Robinson Jeffers was one of our most prolific American poets. His poetic form varied widely, from short lyrics to pages-long narrative verse. Included in this output were thirty-seven poems written as sonnets or including the sonnet form in their structure. By using a formal, "old-fashioned" form in his own way, Jeffers demonstrated the distinction between poetry and prose, one of the goals he sought in his poetry. Additionally, his use of the sonnet form helped Jeffers to control his poetic universe and to begin his journey (though unfinished) toward total "Inhumanism."

Examining Jeffers's sonnets enables his readers to trace his poetic development more precisely. By tracing Jeffers's use of one form throughout his career, we can see the changes and improvements in his verse more easily.

Finally, it becomes apparent when reading the sonnets that Jeffers used the sonnet form very precisely at the beginning of his career and very loosely at the end. As Jeffers became more comfortable with prosody, his ability to go beyond the strict form increased. As Jeffers's sonnet form loosened, his poems became thematically tighter; they said more readily, I believe, what Jeffers intended them to say. Additionally, Jeffers wrote many sonnets as a juvenile and at the beginning of his career; as his work matured, however, his use of the sonnet form diminished. While the sonnet form was useful and appropriate for some of his work, the mature Jeffers also realized that it contained certain limitations. After 1938, Jeffers's increasing preoccupation with the coming Second World War, and his need to write about it, precluded the use of the sonnet form. The terribly modern and frightening things that Jeffers had to say could not be said in what had become a reminder of earlier, less trying times.

. . . . .

THE TENSION OF THE MIND: ROBINSON JEFFERS' RHETORIC OF VIOLENCE
Sharon, Carol Booth, Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, 1988.
Director: James Hart

Robinson Jeffers' "rhetoric of violence," his use of language as a means to persuade his audience of his beliefs, is characterized at its most successful by a powerful tension. From 1924 on, a conflict persists in the lyrics between the Christian/Humanist ethic which stresses love and emphasizes the dignity and perfectability of man, and Jeffers' Inhumanist philosophy which embraces violence as natural and dismisses mankind as insignificant, if not worthless.

Consequently, Jeffers' attempt to accommodate the existence of violence directly contributes both to the strengths and to the weaknesses of his short poems. Expressed as a cultural conflict and as the poet's personal dichotomy, and experienced on different levels of awareness by the reader, the tension generated is the source of the power and the persuasiveness of the short poems; this power explains as well the reader's paradoxical attraction to a body of work whose message is antithetical to conventional Western-European religious and cultural beliefs.

Conversely, loss of tension devitalizes Jeffers' message, weakens the poem's impact, and can lead to a disjunction between the message and its effect on the audience. The audience's disengagement is intensified in some cases by the recognition of a basic contradiction within the Inhumanist philosophy itself, i.e., Jeffers' rejection of human violence as opposed to his acceptance of violence in nature.

This study analyzes the complex, uneven functioning of tension, defined as the conflict between opposing levels of meaning and awareness, in lyrics from different periods. Close textual scrutiny of seven poems substantiates the conclusions. Discussion includes the effect of language choices, the contribution of Jeffers' conflicting definitions of poetic method, and the impact of Jeffers' spiritual background on tension and persuasiveness. Further analysis examines the contribution of tension to unity of rhetorical intent (the paraphrasable meaning of which Jeffers intends to persuade his audience) and rhetorical effect (the poem's imaginative and persuasive effect on the reader). The study concludes with a demonstration of the role of sustained tension in producing poetry which becomes the symbolic embodiment of Jeffers' Inhumanist absolute, incorporating "cruelty and evil as part of the sum of things."

*****

POETIC JUSTICE

Edward Abbey

The March 19, 1988, issue of THE NATION magazine printed, under the heading "Poetic Justice," the following letter by Edward Abbey, in response to Dana Gioia's January 16th review of ROCK AND HAWK: A Selection of Shorter Poems by Robinson Jeffers (Random House), edited by Robert Haas. Edward Abbey is the noted environmentalist, essayist, and writer of fiction.

. . . . .

Thank you for publishing Dana Gioia's review of the new Robinson Jeffers anthology, ROCK AND HAWK [Jan. 16]. Gioia's bold, brave defense of Jeffers's poetry was much needed, long overdue and brilliantly presented. Jeffers is one of our great and basic American poets, right in there with Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost and William Carlos Williams. Jeffers in fact was more than a great poet; he was a great prophet. Everything he wrote about the corruption of empire, the death of democracy, the destruction of our planet and the absurd self-centered vanity of the human animal has come true tenfold since his time. Let justice be done--even in the literary world!

Edward Abbey
Oracle, Arizona

*****

A Typescript Is a Typescript Is a Typescript (Or Is It?)

by Tim Hunt

In the original Boyle edition of TAMAR AND OTHER POEMS (1924), "To the Rock That Will Be a Cornerstone of the House" includes the phrase, "Wing-prints of ancient weathers." When the poem appeared a year later in ROAN STALLION, TAMAR AND OTHER POEMS, this same line opens "Wind-prints," the reading in POEMS (1928). At first glance, the 1925 Boni & Liveright ROAN STALLION and POEMS appear to correct an obvious typo. The line describes the weathering of rock, and the wind is the obvious agent. However, when Jeffers published the poem a final time in the 1938 SELECTED POETRY, the line once again reads "Wing-prints." Which reading is correct?

The answer depends in part on how one views the carbon copy of the typescript used as setting copy for POEMS. This carbon copy, now at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas, is the only surviving "manuscript" for the poem, and as a rule, Jeffers' typescripts are of particular textual value. Jeffers' original pencilled drafts were so nearly illegible that he had little choice but to type his own final copies for publication, and he apparently saw this as an occasion to make final, though usually minor revisions. Since Jeffers seems to have read proof primarily with an eye to correcting errors, not revising, his typescripts would be the fullest, most accurate record of his final intentions for a particular poem. Unfortunately, his publishers usually discarded the typescripts after type was set. Since the publishers (especially Boni & Liveright) typically modified small details, including punctuation, we have been left, in most cases, with two versions of poems, each textually inadequate: the original pencilled draft, where all the marks are necessarily Jeffers' own but where the final revisions are absent, and a published form, where Jeffers' final revisions are mixed with the publisher's alterations.

In the case of "To the Rock," the Texas carbon copy typescript seems to confirm that the phrase should be "Wind-prints," but odds are Jeffers did not type the carbon copy. POEMS, issued by The Book Club of California, was a limited edition, not a trade collection. All but four of its fifteen poems had been published previously. As chance would have it, the Texas carbon copy includes only ten of the fifteen poems and includes only poems which had appeared previously. This suggests Jeffers turned over the typing of the previously published poems, those for which clean and readable copy existed, to a stenographer and typed unpublished poems, those still in pencil script, himself. The one previously published poem, "Winter Sundown," found in POEMS and missing from the carbon of the typescript was perhaps added later or may not have been retyped at all. This elegy for George Sterling first appeared in THE OVERLAND MONTHLY, and Albert Bender, head of the club and an admirer of Sterling, would certainly have had access to copies of the periodical.

It is, of course, possible that the carbon copy typescript did contain all the poems from the volume and that the other sheets have not survived. Several factors argue against this. First, the existence of a carbon copy in the first place. There is no evidence of Jeffers having ever made a carbon copy of anything else he typed (and much circumstantial evidence to indicate he did not). It would, though, have been common practice for a stenographer to make a carbon. Second, the carbon copy shows that the typing was a more even impression than Jeffers usually managed. Third, the typeface differs in various details from the other surviving typescripts from this period. (This is especially obvious for semicolons. Jeffers' typewriter obscured the tail of the semicolon so that it looked almost like a colon.) Fourth, the sheets all have typed page numbers at the bottom; Jeffers, when he gathered his own typescripts for publication, added page numbers in pencil in the upper left or right hand corners. Finally, the details of the carbon copy suggest a typist following an earlier setting without question (if not absolute accuracy). "Birth-Dues," for instance, was the third of a three poem grouping published in POETRY. In the POETRY setting, Jeffers' name is printed in italics a few lines below the poem to indicate the group's authorship and its conclusion. "Birth-Dues" is not the final poem in the POEMS grouping nor in the carbon copy typescript at Texas, yet the carbon copy shows "Robinson Jeffers" typed at the bottom of the poem and then crossed out. (The name is not italicized, but the stenographer omits all italics from the copy he or she was following.) Jeffers is not likely to have typed his name midway through a manuscript and then come along later and crossed it out. Nor was Jeffers likely to have reproduced the involuntary line breaks from the poems' original appearances. Nor was he likely to have typed in commas that he had asked be removed from the POETRY proofs (but which the magazine had retained) only to pencil them out of the carbon.

The reading "Wind-prints" in the POEMS appearance of "To the Rock That Will Be a Cornerstone of the House" is, then, textually irrelevant. POEMS simply reproduces the reading from ROAN STALLION. And the relevant question becomes how and why was the reading changed back to "Wing-prints" in THE SELECTED POETRY. The poems in THE SELECTED POETRY were set from Jeffers' earlier trade collections, which means "To the Rock" would have been set from its appearance in ROAN STALLION. The set of uncorrected proofs for THE SELECTED POETRY at Occidental College show that the poem, as first set, did read "Wind-prints," which means that the shift to "Wing-prints" had to be called for in proof by either Jeffers or the Random House editor. Jeffers is the more likely, since the ROAN STALLION reading would probably have struck an editor as the more plausible.

Does any of this make any difference, though? "To the Rock" is still largely the same poem whichever phrase one encounters, but it may be that the less obvious (and correct) reading of "Wing-prints" does contribute to our understanding of Jeffers. "Wind-prints" conveys the literal observation of an eroded rock. "Wing-prints" suggests, evokes, the weather as a kind of gigantic bird, a living part of nature acting on other living elements, including rock, an interaction which parallels the speaker's own vision detailed in his own interaction with rock.

ROBINSON JEFFERS AND HIS PRINTERS

By Tyrus G. Harmsen

This year [1987] marks the centennial of the birth of Robinson Jeffers. From a childhood in the vicinity of Pittsburgh and early education in boarding schools in Germany and Switzerland, young Jeffers moved with his family in 1903 to southern California where he entered Occidental College for his junior year. Two years later he received his B.A. degree, pursued graduate study in medicine at the University of Southern California, and there he met Una (Call) Kuster. Their romance intensified over the next few years, and in 1913 when Una and Ted Kuster were divorced, Robin and Una were married. Their thought was to travel in England, settle at Lyme Regis, and Jeffers would pursue his interest in writing poetry. The first World War changed these plans and instead the young couple followed a friend's suggestion and moved to Carmel, California, which they considered to be their "inevitable place." Here they built their home, Tor House, and later Hawk Tower. Jeffers wrote in a letter to a friend in 1925: "My address remains Carmel, as I expect it always will."[1]

While a student at Occidental College, Jeffers wrote verses for student literary publications and sold his first poem to THE YOUTH'S COMPANION in 1904. In the years following his graduation he continued to write poetry and in 1912, after receiving a small inheritance, decided to have some of his poems printed. He tells the story in a COLOPHON article, "First Book." "For the purpose I made acquaintance with an older author of verses [John Steven McGroarty] who was somehow interested in a printing-shop called the Grafton Publishing Company. . . . I was very willing to pay for the manufacture of five hundred copies, and took away my manuscript to arrange it for the printer."[2] On the way home from Los Angeles he stopped in a bar in Redondo, lost his poems, and had to type them out again from memory. Although the book, FLAGONS AND APPLES, didn't sell, Jeffers was satisfied to have seen his poems in print. Four years later "a new accumulation of verses began to trouble me. This time I thought of regular publication, and mailed my manuscript across the continent to Macmillan Company, who astonished me with a favorable answer. This book was called CALIFORNIANS; it found no readers, but it seems interesting that it found an excellent publisher at the first attempt."[3]

Some years later, Jeffers sought to have his first long narrative poem, "Tamar, published.

> In 1920 or 1921 I wrote a story in verse called TAMAR, and I have heard that it was sent in vain to publisher after publisher, but that is not true. It was offered to none; it was so lengthy that I believed no publisher's reader would look through it. TAMAR was kept in a drawer until I saw a little advertisement by a New York printer, Peter G. Boyle, in the book-review section of THE NEW YORK TIMES . . . . The advertisement offered printing, not publishing, and my mind reverted to my folly of 1912, yet with differences. This time I had no extra money burning my pocket; on the other hand, it seemed to me that the verses were not merely negligible, like the old ones, but had some singularity, whether they were good or not. Perhaps, if they were printed, someone might look at them sometime--habent sua fata libelli--little books have such queer destinies. Boyle read TAMAR AND OTHER POEMS, and set a price on the printing, one that I knew was very moderate. He added some praise of TAMAR that seemed to me excessive, but I learned later that he was sincerely enthusiastic about it. After several months of hesitation I told him to print, but only five hundred copies, not the thousand that he advised.[4]

Favorable reviews of TAMAR brought sudden fame to Jeffers and in the late twenties and early thirties he averaged a volume of new poems each year. Typographically, his early volumes were not distinguished. He was fortunate, however, to have Horace Liveright as his publisher. "Liveright was a Gatsby-like figure who sometimes epitomized the excesses of the Twenties at their most blatant. On the other hand, one has only to consider the books he published, the way he promoted them and the conviction with which he defended them to discover a man who was ahead of his time. Important writers, playwrights, and artists were doing memorable things during that era--and Horace Liveright recognized the significance of their achievements."[5] With the upheaval of the depression years, Liveright went out of business and Jeffers, with offers from a dozen different publishers, moved to Random House. Bennett Cerf had an eye for fine printing and saw to it that his publications were well designed. Rather than a history of Jeffers' publishers, however, I wish to write of some of the distinguished printers who have put his poetry into print. With this theme in mind, the remainder of this article will proceed printer by printer.

In 1925 the Book Club of California offered an anthology of California poets and Jeffers' poem, "Continent's End," was chosen for the title and printed as the frontispiece by none other than San Francisco's well-known printer, John Henry Nash.

San Francisco has nurtured a number of fine printers and not the least of these were the Grabhorn brothers, Ed and Bob. They opened their shop in the city of the Golden Gate in 1920 and were also soon printing for the Book Club of California. By 1928, with Jeffers well established as a contemporary poet, the Book Club had the Grabhorn Press print a selection of Jeffers' short poems, with an introduction by B. H. Lehman and a frontispiece portrait by Ansel Adams. In true Grabhorn style, you can feel the indentation of type into paper. Six copies were specially bound at the Press in full morocco for presentation and signed by Ed Grabhorn. Jeffers, well pleased with the results, wrote his friend Albert M. Bender: "The volumes are most admirably designed and wrought, and we're proud of them; I'm writing Grabhorn a note today to say so."[6]

Jeffers and his wife Una did not care for little books in which poems were printed separately. Even so, the next Grabhorn tended to fall into this category. Theodore M. Lilienthal, San Francisco bookseller and book collector and friend of the Jeffers and the Grabhorns alike, secured permission to have a Jeffers poem separately printed. The Grabhorns lavished their usual attention on the job in hand and printed the one-page poem in a thin small folio format. Una wrote to S. S. Alberts, Jeffers' bibliographer: "I am mailing to you on Monday--it is already wrapped--a book of Robin's gotten out by Grabhorn of S.F. It just happened--you know R.J. hates little books and little choice collectors' items--and has refused scores of times to allow them to be made of his work. Well, Lilienthal of S.F. (Gelber-Lilienthal bookshop) persuaded Robin to give them a little poem which was, as we understood, to be just a leaflet for Christmas sale. It's only 14 lines. It appears in book form--beautifully done, of course, from Grabhorn."[7]

In 1935 the Grabhorns printed a more substantial volume of Jeffers' poems for Random House, SOLSTICE AND OTHER POEMS. After sending off the manuscript, Jeffers, like many another poet, had a few afterthoughts and wrote to Bennett Cerf about several changes. Later, while reading the page proof, Jeffers indicated several places where he wished the lines spaced differently. A limited edition of 320 copies was beautifully printed, with a wood engraving of the Random House mark on the title page by Mallette Dean, and the Grabhorns' dolphin device designed by Joseph Senel on the colophon page. An interesting bibliographical feature of this book is that the leaf with pages 35 and 36 is a cancel.[8] Several years later Una wrote: "We both felt that his SOLSTICE vol. suffered very much from the way it was scrambled into broken lines by the Grabhorn Press printing & were careful to see it rearranged properly in the SELECTED POEMS."[9]

In January 1935, Jeffers wrote the commentary on a George Sterling letter printed by the Grabhorn Press for the Book Club of California keepsake series, LETTERS OF WESTERN AUTHORS. To Albert Bender, Jeffers wrote: "Thank--you--and the Book Club--very much for all those copies of the George Sterling folder. It is marvelously done, both the typography and the reproduction of the letter--a beautiful thing, that the Book Club must be proud of."[10]

In 1936 the Grabhorns did two Jeffers items: THE BEAKS OF EAGLES for Albert M. Bender, and Melba Berry Bennett's ROBINSON JEFFERS AND THE SEA.

Another Jeffers Grabhorn never came to pass. Una tells the story: "Horace Lyon is about to bring out a limited de Luxe ed. pub. by Grabhorn, a book of magnificent photogrpahs of this coast with captions from R.'s poetry & call it 'Jeffers Country.' There is a foreword by Robin & a fine one too! Lyon had great hopes of interesting Cerf in doing a trade ed. at reasonable cost but has had no success as yet."[11] A month later Una commented to Ted Lilienthal: "And very sorry that the book of photographs didn't get done. They are superb and Robin's foreword very good."[12] Proofs of the Grabhorn title page survive.[13] Eventually the volume was published by the Scrimshaw Press in 1971.

After Una's death in 1950, Jeffers wrote a moving poem, "Hungerfield," first published in POETRY. In 1952 the Grabhorn Press privately printed thirty copies in a large quarto format. In September Jeffers wrote at length to his friend T. M. Lilienthal:

> I have just remembered a precaution to be taken with Grabhorn, if he should print the poem. A good many years ago he printed for Random House a book of mine called "Solstice," and did a beautiful job of course, but he cut up my long lines into phrases, making secondary verses, which changed and I think spoiled the rhythm that I intended. I didn't see any proofs until the final ones, and then didn't have the heart to make him do his work over again--for he is an artist--but I wouldn't want it to happen again. The lines have to be broken, of course, because they're too long for a page; but they ought not to be broken to indicate sound or sense, but merely according to space, as in the magazine.[14]

A second letter followed: "Here are the twelve pages of proof. I never saw any printing that I liked so well. I am grateful to Ed Grabhorn, and to you for your trouble, and to Noel, though I have noted your saying that he wants to remain unnamed."[15] At the end of the proof sheets Jeffers wrote: "Dear Ed Grabhorn--It is very beautifully printed. Thank you. Robinson Jeffers."[16]

In 1953, for Ted Lilienthal's sixtieth birthday, his wife Fran asked Jeffers for a poem, De Rerum Virtute, which she had the Grabhorn Press print in an edition of thirty copies; and one copy on vellum was signed by friends.

Other Jeffers texts printed by the Grabhorn Press were his foreword to D.H. Lawrence, FIRE AND OTHER POEMS, 1940; "The Ocean's Tribute," 1958, a four-page leaflet; "For an hour on Christmas Eve," printed as a Christmas greeting for Irving J. Robbins, Jr., 1969; and a recipe by Jeffers in SINCERELY YOURS, a collection of favorite recipes of well-known persons compiled by Bess Boardman, Grabhorn Press, 1942 (Jeffers' recipe was for kidney and mushroom stew); and AVE ROBINSON JEFFERS VALE, 1962.

Ward Ritchie's star is high in the firmament of Jeffers' printers, for he has had a hand in more than twenty publications by and about Jeffers. These he handsomely and charmingly chronicled in THE POET AND THE PRINTERS, which he printed on dampened handmade paper on his Albion handpress in an edition of "about 50 copies" in 1980. Ward's first Jeffers printing is now a well-known rarity. He writes:

> In 1929, after having floundered in and out of law school in search of a career, I settled on printing and in trying to teach myself this craft I wrote to the poets I had admired for permission to print some of their poems in a series of small booklets. I was rewarded by permission from a generous handful and I experimented on Carl Sandburg, Leonie Adams, Archibald MacLeish, Hildegarde Flanner and Louise Bogan before I dared undertake Robinson Jeffers. Under the title of STARS, I printed two sonnets of his which had appeared previously in THE BOOKMAN.[17]

Eighty copies of the first printing were Ward's intention, but he reported on a tipped-in slip that only seventy-two survived the press run. When his friend, Lawrence Clark Powell, read his copy, a few errors were detected and most of the edition was destroyed. Ritchie recollects that about fifteen copies were bound in black boards. A second printing of 110 copies in blue wrappers appeared in March.

Here is Ward's account of his second Jeffers project:

> In 1930, with the inexplicable confidence of youth, I made my way to Paris expressly for the purpose of working in the atelier of Francois-Louis Schmied, whom I thought to be the most imaginative printer in the world. Perplexed and unprepared, Schmied couldn't find a graceful way to get rid of me and so I began an apprenticeship under his tutelage. I had brought along with me my batch of Jeffers' poems and while working there managed to set them in type and print thirty copies on the hand press in a bold Schmiedian style. This book was APOLOGY FOR BAD DREAMS, now almost lost in the obscurity of its rarity.[18]

Upon his return to the United States, Ward's first commission came as a result of a visit to Elmer Adler at THE COLOPHON. Ritchie encouraged Jeffers to write his account, "First Book," and had Paul Landacre do a woodcut of Hawk Tower which graces the opening page of the section.

Space does not permit listing or mentioning all of the books by and about Jeffers in which Ward Ritchie was involved. A few favorites cannot be passed by. In 1938 William Van Wyck submitted a short essay on Jeffers which Ward Ritchie designed, printed, and published. Since the text was not very long, Alvin Lustig, who was working at The Ward Ritchie Press at the time, was asked to add some ornamentation. His creative use of type ornaments, placed at the head of each page of text and printed in a variety of colors, made this into a most attractive little book, printed on Arak paper.

In the early 1950s Merle Armitage, impresario, editor, and designer, became engaged in a Jeffers project with an artist residing in Carmel, Jean Kellogg. She had executed a series of etchings to illustrate Jeffers' poem, "The Loving Shepherdess," and the man in New York who was printing the plates died suddenly. Armitage sought the assistance of Ward Ritchie and arranged with Random House to publish the book as a limited edition. It was two years in the making, and a lively and at times heated correspondence passed among Armitage, Kellogg, and Ritchie.[19] In the end the book was printed in 1956 in an edition of 115 copies on Rives paper, hand set in Bembo, and signed by Jeffers. It is a noble and now scarce book.

Jeffers expressed his views on poetry in an article for THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, "Poetry, Gongorism, and a Thousand Years," and it was later suggested as a separate book publication of the Ward Ritchie Press. Two hundred copies were printed in October 1949, set in Bembo by Caroline Anderson and Albert Yarish, and designed by Ward Ritchie. It was chosen as one of the Fifty Books of the Year.

From his long experience with Jeffers, as a printer, designer, and publisher, Ward Ritchie has written extensively about him and other authors and printers he has known. In the past twelve years from his home in Laguna Beach, California, he has issued a lovely series of books printed by hand on his Albion, most of which he has written himself. A 1978 publication was SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF ROBINSON JEFFERS, Laguna Verde Imprenta, with an engraving by Leo Wyatt. In the same year Tor House Foundation, which is engaged in preserving Jeffers' home, sought funds by having Ritchie print a Jeffers poem, "Whom Should I Write For, Dear, But for You?" in an edition of one hundred copies, with proceeds going to Tor House.

For a quick summary of other Jeffers items designed or printed by Ritchie, he designed Lawrence Clark Powell's ROBINSON JEFFERS, THE MAN AND HIS WORK, The Primavera Press, 1934; printed two exhibition catalogs for Occidental College Library, 1935, and 1955; published OF UNA JEFFERS by Edith Greenan, 1939; published Una Jeffers' VISITS TO IRELAND in 1954; printed Melba Berry Bennett's biography of Jeffers, THE STONE MASON OF TOR HOUSE, in 1966; and printed THE POET AND THE PRINTERS, 1980.

The scene now shifts to the East Coast and four printers there. The Marchbanks Press printed the limited edition of CAWDOR for Horace Liveright in 1928. A Yonkers, New York, Jeffers collector, Sydney S. Alberts, compiled an exceptionally detailed and complete bibliography of Jeffers' work, published in 1933 by Random House and printed by The Walpole Printing Office. Fifteen copies of a special edition of the bibliography contained a leaf or two of an original Jeffers manuscript, were signed by Jeffers and Alberts, and were specially bound.

A Yale student, Frederic Prokosch, without consulting the Jeffers's, printed a small edition of "Rock and Hawk" and then sent copies to the Jeffers. This was Una's reaction: "It says printed by the author which means printed as a present to the author & not at the order of the author. It is dated Xmas 1934. The poem was taken from Scribner's, January 1935. It was done by a young Yale man Frederic Prokosch whose father I believe is a professor there. He says, 'I need hardly say that my only motive in printing them was the delight I myself obtained in printing and binding them. The poem I love particularly.'"[20]

A fourth East Coast printer of Jeffers was Joseph Blumenthal. In 1937 the limited edition of SUCH COUNSELS YOU GAVE TO ME & OTHER POEMS was designed and printed at the Spriral Press--three hundred copies on Gelre handmade paper. Some years later Steuben Glass issued an unusual volume which was also printed by the Spiral Press, POETRY IN CRYSTAL, 1963; Jeffers' poem, "Birds and Fishes," was one of those included.

Another West Coast press closely associated with Jeffers was the Quercus Press of San Mateo, California. In the mid-thirties, Theodore M. Lilienthal set up a small press in the garden of his home, secured a press and type, and engaged his wife and sister-in-law in the work of the press. As a close personal friend of the Jeffers's, he obtained a Jeffers poem from time to time to be printed in a small edition for the poet and a small circle of friends. In July 1937 he did two separate poems--"October Week-End" and "Hope is Not for the Wise." In 1939 the Jefferses' dog, Haig, a part of the family for many years, died, and Jeffers wrote a poem to his memory. It was suitably printed at the Quercus Press, with a photograph of Haig by Horace D. Lyon as a frontispiece. Excerpts from Una's letters provide details: "I took your proof down--they all liked it so much, Ward Ritchie was there & inspected it to make suggestions if any. He approved of it & made no adverse criticism--thought as we did the '--copies by Quercus Press etc' should be on back & not at bottom of poem."[21] "Horace showed me the picture done on the paper you sent & we both think it is fine. I decided not to write anything to put under the picture. It seems perfect with just the poem."[22]

To reprint Jeffers' first poem which was sold for publication, the Quercus Press selected a folio format for printing "The Condor." In 1940 a most attractive volume, TWO CONSOLATIONS, contained two Jeffers poems and excerpts from Una's diary of a visit to Kelmscott Manor. One of the presses acquired by Mr. Lilienthal was an Albion formerly used by Morris at the Kelmscott Press, "a small press for taking proofs." Thus it was fitting to use Hammer and Anvil paper for this edition of 250 copies.

Adrian Wilson, San Francisco printer, book designer, and scholar of printing history, came to print Jeffers' MEDITATION ON SAVIOURS in 1951 in somewhat unusual cirmstances. The story is best told in his own words:

> This extraordinarily limited edition was issued by Hermes Publications to convince Kenneth Burke, the literary and philosophic critic, that it should publish his work. The book was to demonstrate the high standards of quality of its editions. When the publishers, Mildred and Theodore Ligda, commissioned me to design and print the five copies, I thought mistakenly that they intended to assume the publication of Jeffers' entire works, which I would then print. No effort on this project could have been too great. I chose a Tuscany handmade paper, Centaur headings and initials in red, and a binding of gray Roma paper over boards with a terra-cotta cloth spine and a pasted label. The design delighted the Ligdas. I discovered then that Theodore was a professional linotype setter, and that he had already set the whole poem in 14pt. Granjon with its kerned f logotypes and ct and st ligatures. The composition was excellent and I incorporated it into the book.

> This promotional gambit was successful to the point that Hermes did publish some of Kenneth Burke's books, although in routine trade editions. I heard no word of Jeffers' reaction to his book, nor did I ever print anything else written by him. Collectors of his work, and they are many, have plagued me for years to buy my copy at almost any price. In 1981 a Los Angeles dealer offered one for $3500, which came to rest at Long Beach State College. I have not been as shrewd as some fine printers who have had extra copies of small editions bound, salted them away until the edition was out of print, and then quietly sold them to avid collectors. With the Jeffers book I certainly missed my greatest chance.[23]

An artist and printer whose work is well-known to California printers and book collectors is H. Mallette Dean. He was born in Spokane, studied at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, and, among other things in the depression years of the early thirties, illustrated books for the Grabhorn and Colt Presses. Later on he set up a press in his home in Marin County and there printed one of the fine editions of a Jeffers prose text. In 1941 Jeffers had been invited to inaugurate a series of readings by contemporary poets in the Library of Congress. He also spoke at Columbia, Harvard, and elsewhere--he was not given to such a series of speaking engagements. It was not until 1956 that his talk was put into print, but it was worth waiting for. Dean chose French Elzevir for the text, executed some woodcuts printed in colors for section headings, and turned out a worthy edition of Jeffers' text, THEMES IN MY POEMS, published by the Book Club of California.

The California poet and printer, William Everson, was profoundly influenced by Jeffers' work from an early age. In addition to editing several volumes of Jeffers' poetry, it was almost to be expected that sooner or later he would set a Jeffers text himself. The occasion came as a printer in residence at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where he taught printing. In 1973, under the imprint of the Lime Kiln Press, he did a folio edition of the poem, "Tragedy Has Obligations," printed in red and black, with a woodcut illustration by Allison Clough. His next project was to set a group of Jeffers' short poems in an oblong format, thus printing them without a break to the long lines as Jeffers had written them. To give balance to an opening of the book, an unusual plan was devised: " . . . in processing GRANITE & CYPRESS each sheet was skip fed. The first pull was made on the naked tympan, then the damped sheet of handmade paper, placed over it, was run through the press. This second pull, the true one, thus received a reverse imprint of itself, offset from the backup, so that in the finished book when the reader turns the page the shadow of the previous poem in effect provides its own image to enliven the verso, and the visual balance is achieved."[24] The book is further enhanced by a slipcase of cypress with a small slab of granite inset on one side. GRANITE & CYPRESS, 1976, may come to be recognized as one of the typographic monuments of the latter twentieth century. It is a choice and classic book, in concept and execution.

Two contemporary northern California printers round out this survey of Jeffers and the fine printers who have issued his work. Carolyn and James Robertson, owners of the Yolla Bolly Press of Covelo, California, consider Jeffers a supportive influence as they seek to print fine books in an idyllic rural setting--a local landscape that would have pleased Jeffers. "It is no accident that we began to look for our place in the tradition of California fine presses by turning to those who wrote of the land we love. The search led quickly to Robinson Jeffers, then to John Steinbeck, William Saroyan, and finally to Joaquin Miller."[25] Their first Jeffers title was a reprint of Louis Adamic's early essay on Jeffers, illustrated with family snapshots, and with a reminiscence by Jeffers' son Garth as an introduction. Their second publication was part of a series of reprints of American literature in illustrated editions; for Jeffers they chose CAWDOR. This year, for the Jeffers centennial, they issued in January the love letters of Robin and Una, WHERE SHALL I TAKE YOU TO. This also is illustrated with some early family pictures. The binding is appealing--a German bookcloth over thin boards.

Peter Rutledge Koch, formerly a partner in the Black Stone Press, established his business of typographic design in 1984 in Oakland. One of his first works was a new edition of Jeffers' APOLOGY FOR BAD DREAMS, 1986, published by James Linden and issued in a portfolio, illustrated with photographs by Michael Mundy.

While it is beyond the scope of this article to try and cite every fine and worthy edition of Jeffers' work, a few other printers may also be quickly mentioned.

After Jeffers died, William Everson wrote a poem in his memory which was first published in RAMPARTS. In 1964 the Auerhahn Press of San Francisco reprinted "The Poet is Dead" with an introduction by Everson explaining his indebtedness to Jeffers.

Jeffers' short poem, "Only an Hour," proved popular for use on greeting cards. It was first separately printed in Carmel by the Petergate Press. Then Lawton and Alfred Kennedy printed it for the Gleeson Library Associates, University of San Francisco. A third printing was for Theodore M. Lilienthal, who engaged Sherwood Grover (Grace Hoper Press) to print it for a holiday greeting.

Other southern California printers of Jeffers include William M. Cheney, who did "The Desert" as a miniature book for Glen Dawson in 1976; Tyrus G. Harmsen, who printed UNA & ROBINSON JEFFERS: TWO EARLY LETTERS TO HAZEL PINKHAM, at the Tiger Press in 1983; and Scott Coombs, a Book Arts Program student at Occidental College, who printed Jeffers' poem, "A Little Scraping," as a broadside illustrated with a linoleum cut in 1986. Robinson Jeffers is a poet of the ages. He has been served well by a host of good printers who have seen fit to design and print his poetry and prose with proper distinction. To quote Joseph Blumenthal, author of ROBERT FROST AND HIS PRINTERS, "I think it can safely be said that there were no American writers other than Frost and Jeffers whose work was printed during their lifetime with equal ardor, skill, and affection."[26] Others will follow in their footsteps, for Jeffers' poetry will endure, and inspire future printers to give it a worthy setting.

. . . . .

NOTES

All letters cited are in the Jeffers Collection, Occidental College, and used by permission of Jeffers Literary Properties.

1. Letter of Robinson Jeffers to Albert M. Bender, June 21, 1925, THE SELECTED LETTERS OF ROBINSON JEFFERS 1897-1962, ed. Ann N. Ridgeway (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 42.

2. THE COLOPHON, Part Ten, (1932), p.[2].

3. *Ibid.*, pp [4-51.

4. *Ibid.*, pp [5-7].

5. Walker Gilmer, HORACE LIVERIGHT, PUBLISHER OF THE TWENTIES (New York: David Lewis, 1970), p. ix.

6. Jeffers to Bender, Oct. 17, 1928, SELECTED LETTERS *op. cit.*, p. 134.

7. Una Jeffers to Sydney A. Alberts, Dec. 29, 1934.

8. I am indebted to Covington Rodgers for pointing this out to me.

9. Una to Lawrence Clark Powell, Dec. 2, 1938.

10. Jeffers to Bender, Jan. 31, 1935., SELECTED LETTERS, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

11. Una to Powell, Apr. 20, 1938.

12. Una to Theodore M. Lilienthal, May 26, 1938.

13. Jeffers Collection, Occidental College

14. Jeffers to Lilienthal, Sept. 1952, SELECTED LETTERS, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

15. Jeffers to Lilienthal, second letter, Sept., 1952.

16. Proof sheets in Jeffers Collection, Occidental College.

17. Ward Ritchie, SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF ROBINSON JEFFERS (Laguna Beach: Laguna Verde Imprenta, 1978), p. 9.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

19. The correspondence is in the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles.

20. Una to Alberts, Feb. 18, 1935.

21. Una to Frances Lilienthal, June 12, 1939.

22. Una to Frances Lilienthal, [June 1939].

23. THE WORK & PLAY OF ADRIAN WILSON: A BIBLIOGRAPHY WITH COMMENTARY, ed. by Joyce Lancaster Wilson, (Austin: W. Thomas Taylor, 1983), p. 35.

24. Prospectus for GRANITE & CYPRESS.

25. PRINTER'S DOZEN: THE YOLLA BOLLY PRESS AT TWELVE (Covelo, California: The Yolla Bolly Press, 1985), p.[6].

26. ROBERT FROST AND HIS PRINTERS (Austin: W. Thomas Taylor, 1985), p. 36.

The foregoing article is reprinted with permission from PRINTING HISTORY, The Journal of the American Printing History Association, No 18 (Vol. IX, No. 2), 1987.

*****

UNA JEFFERS CORRESPONDENT: A LETTER ON ROBINSON JEFFERS' GHOSTS AND BELIEF IN LIFE-AFTER-DEATH

The following letter was discovered in a first edition of one of Jeffers' works, no doubt left there inadvertently by the same Mr. Meikle whose identity is otherwise unknown. It was thoughtfully forwarded by Mr. Stanley Willis, who finds it both "interesting and significant."

June 12, 1942

Dear Mr. Meikle:

If you ask whether Robinson Jeffers believes that one lives after death with some kind of personality intact that he had in this world, I am sure he would say "no." He feels that life persists, but somehow blended & fused into a universal force. But you will find in his writings over & over again spirits--or at least the voices of dead people talking, even sometimes semblances of their forms present. (See again & again in "Tamar" & in "Cawdor" & specifically in "Come, Little Birds" (in "Be Angry at the Sun"). See "Ghosts in England" (in "Descent to the Dead").

It is not unlikely that fragments of personality persist sometimes after death--for a time at least. Certainly it seems true that a sensitive person occasionally feels the vivid imprint of a strong or a tragic personality on a locality or room--in the absence of that person who may be dead or not, but who is at least not present.

If you have read "Of Una Jeffers" by Edith Greenan you will know about the one real psychical experience we have had. It has to do with a much-loved English bulldog.

A great deal of the power of poetry lies in its evocative qualities. When it evokes overtones from association with folklore or race memories (which can easily be represented by the voices of the past, or by magical forces), it is often at its height. I do not think it is permissible to inquire too urgently of a writer--"Do you believe exactly this or that?" The interpretation lies with the individual reader (in the case of the greatest poetry) & his background will condition his understanding.

These are my own random thoughts in response to you letter. My husband does not like talking about his work.

Very sincerely,

Una Jeffers

. . . . .

The letter is interesting because it reflects Jeffers' custom of answering correspondence (which he hated) through Una (he would sometimes write out an answer in the third person so that Una could use it); it also gets into the Jefferses' involvement in the preternatural (Una describes one seance which she and Robinson attended (RJN 51:39); the poem, "Come, Little Birds," which she mentions, reflects a similar experience).

The letter is significant in that it is not just speculation on lingering life-after-death as dissipation of energies, but it deals with the mythopoetic force of ghost presences in literature. It cites the evocative power of ghosts in folklore and their ability to express racial memories or embody magical forces as described in the early studies of Harrison, Cornford, and Murray. Una also reiterates the poet's typical evasion of explanations. Jeffers let go of his works, it seems, much more readily than most of his contemporaries. He was willing to let readers and critics make what they would; ultimately the poem was to be co-created by the reader.

Una's final lines appear evasive. She backs off from her initial interpretation of her husband's mind and from what seems a series of observations he might have made to her regarding the questions put to him by his correspondent. Which ones were her "own random thoughts," as distinct from the thoughts evoked from Jeffers, she would seem to leave unclear.

*****

THE SINCEREST FLATTERY: George Sterling's STRANGE WATERS as an imitation of Jeffers' TAMAR

by Robert Ian Scott

In 1926, TAMAR had just made Jeffers famous when his friend, the older Carmel and San Francisco poet George Sterling, wrote STRANGE WATERS; apparently Sterling hoped to have a similar success by writing a similar poem. But TAMAR got reviewed by Sterling and others as something exciting, new, important; in the November, 1926, NEW MASSES, James Rorty reviewed STRANGE WATERS as "easily the worst thing Sterling ever wrote" and important only because it "unconsciously parodies" Jeffers' "worst faults," which would, of course, make attacking Jeffers' work easier. Sterling must have felt that in trying to rescue his life and career, he had wrecked both and needlessly hurt Jeffers, one of his few remaining friends. That November, Sterling killed himself.

Letter 90 of Jeffers' SELECTED LETTERS told Sterling that Rorty's "irritation . . . though it blinded him to some beautiful poetry" was "quite justifiable if he thought you were taking a lead from me. Of course you oughtn't and of course you weren't." A month later, twelve days before Sterling's suicide, apparently still trying to reassure Sterling, Jeffers added in letter 91, "what a slop-can this MASSES is." But Sterling had taken Jeffers' lead. On March 18, 1925, letter 26 from Jeffers to Sterling had described incest as a "more tragic" subject because it violates taboos and symbolizes the self-obsession which monopolizes human energies (and so helps cause the catastrophes in TAMAR and other tragedies). Like TAMAR, STRANGE WATERS tells "a tale of forbidden love" between a brother and sister on the California coast.

STRANGE WATERS also has a character very much like Jeffers himself: Ralph Narron, its protagonist, writes poetry, has a wife of Irish ancestry, a small private income, likes a quiet life, and lives in the house he has built on the California coast not too far from a village (as Carmel was then). Sterling's book ROBINSON JEFFERS: THE MAN AND THE ARTIST shows how much he admired Jeffers; had Sterling assumed his readers would find a character so much like Jeffers interesting? But "Narron" suggests "narrow" and Narron's ignorant self-righteousness dooms the pathetic young lovers. Had Sterling also come to resent Jeffers' success? We can test such hypotheses by reading STRANGE WATERS, reprinted here in its entirety (probably for the first time since its initial publication) by permission of The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley, which owns the copyright to George Sterling's papers.

The Jeffers had twin sons; Ralph and Mary Narron have no children, but STRANGE WATERS begins when Mary's brother sends his twins to live with the Narrons when he dies. The brother's letter describes this as his "revenge;" the Narrons ignore that warning and fail to recognize the twins as brother and sister. Ralph overhears them make love, calls them lesbians, and they flee. The next morning, the brother is found dead below a cliff, and the sister is last seen swimming far out into the Pacific; Ralph's narrow-mindedness has helped to cause at least one death.

As parodies often do, STRANGE WATERS exaggerates its original's most obvious characteristics in many fewer pages--in ten instead of TAMAR's sixty--without explaining them. As in TAMAR, we see incestuous young lovers trapped by their isolation and by an ancient family feud. But we can only guess why Mary's brother wants revenge. Did she scratch his face years ago because he tried to seduce her? If so, his twins may seem the victims of an inherited fault, but the revenge seems oddly misdirected; we don't see Mary suffer much from it. The twins seem like Romeo and Juliet, pathetic, but not intelligent or tough enough to seem heroic. Sterling's characters may seem unconvincing because he only tells us what they do; Jeffers lets us "see" his characters act, react, confuse themselves, and come to painful ends. As a result, we may feel fear and pity enough for his characters to let us enjoy a catharsis, a liberation from selfish fear and self-pity, as well as seeing how the world and humans work and so, how not to behave. Without some such emotional effect and discovery, why read anything?

How did Jeffers react to Sterling's death? He wrote two articles remembering him, and this poem, which appears on page 152 of CAWDOR AND OTHER POEMS, published in November 1928:

George Sterling's Death

Sorrows have come before and stood mute
With blind implacable masks; when the eyes have
endured them,
They draw sidelong and stand
At the shoulder; they never depart.

The sweetest voice has desired silence, the eyes
Have desired darkness, the passion has desired peace.
He that gave, and not asked
But for a friend's sake, has taken
One gift for himself: he gives a greater, he goes
Remembered utterly generous, constraining sorrow
Like winter sundown, splendid
Memory to ennoble our nights.

The gray mothers of rain sail and glide over,
The rain has fallen, the deep-wombed earth is renewed;
Under the greening of the hills
Gulls flock in the black furrows.

And now it is hard to believe he will not return
To be our guest in the house, nor walk beside me
Again by the Carmel River
Or on the Sovranes reef.

. . . . .

STRANGE WATERS

by George Sterling

I.

LOW CLOUD and the invisible surf of thunder,
The shrouded sun gone under,
Then darkness and the sad rain falling,
And once, far off, an unseen sea-bird calling.
I cannot sleep. There are shadows in the night--
Come not for absence of the blessed light.

Why should a sea-bird wail?
Whither can be her flight?
The winds are battling above.
Under the wings of the gale
I will tell their bitter tale,
A tale of forbidden love.

(I shall get no thanks for it,
Where the righteous in judgment sit.)

Ralph Narron, of the Mendocinan hills,
Built him a house aid married Mary Quinn,
A girl of western Ireland. Happiness
Drowsed on their threshold, for their needs were few
And their love-hunger long to satisfy.
There was a village not too far away;
He had a tiny income: all went well.
Leisure was his for rhyming; as for her,
She had her flowers and a house of doves.
The wind from off a thousand leagues of sea
Set rapture in their blood. The summer fog
Fought with the sun. The winter rains were sweet.
So pain, the shadow of the wings of Time,
Stood off from them until the certain hour.
Sometimes they longed for friends of their own kind,
And often for dear children. Neither came.

Saturday. Ralph came home and threw the mail
Into her lap--four letters, one of which
Bore the mild countenance of England's queen
Upon its postage. Mary gave one glance,
Then cried: "My God! it's Brian!" as she threw
The missive on the floor. Ralph picked it up.
She stared at it as tho it were a snake.

Once only had she mentioned him before,
Her brother, living in an ancient house
Built on a sea-cliff of green Donegal--
Once only, and to call him "monster." Pressed
To give a reason, she shut eyes and wept. . . .
But still, the letter. "Open it," she said,
Turning away her face. He broke the seal. . . .
"Well, read it," and he read--such words as these:
"Mary:
When this is in your holy hands,
I shall be carrion, hidden in a tomb
Above our house of stone in Donegal.
This body shall be sweet as is my name
In your soul's nostrils. But the real joke's
To come: within a month my tall twin-girls
Will stand before your threshold. With your heart,
You can but take them in. Do so, my dear,
And they'll avenge me for a distant hour,
Your nails along my cheek, your virtuous words.
Don't think they come as beggars: I have sold
My acres here, and twenty thousand pounds
Are to their credit. Take my babies in.
Ha! We are of the same blood, they and I!
There's more in that than you've a notion of."

The letter closed with a maimed signature,
And Mary frowned and smiled, and smiled and frowned.
"My nieces! And his children! Joy and shame!
But still, my nieces. They'll be eighteen now."
"So old as that!"
"Yes, he's eleven years
Older than I."
"How old is he today?
As old as Pharaoh. Well, God speed their feet!"
"But Ralph, think for awhile: What could he mean
By saying they'll avenge him?"
"But for what?"
"That doesn't matter. Surely he was mad. . . .
Perhaps. . . . It might be better if they went
To some good school."
"Oh, well, let's wait and see.
We'll have to wait: no stopping them."
"I'm cold.
Rub my two hands. We'll see what they are like."

They saw. It was by morning and in May.
There came a knocking on the kitchen door,
And Ralph was nearer. He threw back the catch.

How can I tell you what he saw, who once
Alone have seen them, and you not at all?
I sit and muse. They were beyond the pace
Of laggard words. "Twin eaglets," once I said.
"Twin eaglets, fierce of eye and orange-crowned."
Slender they stood, and tall, Callirhoe
An inch the taller, shouldered like a boy.
Deirdre more girlish, rosier of face.
And with red hair they had that skin of snow
That seems so cool, and which conceals such fire.
0 mythical, lost beauty that men sought
In dim, heroic years! You shone restored
In that high loveliness, those faces blent
Of ocean's foam and sapphire, and earth's rose!
But most one felt the challenge of their eyes,
As pure as winter moonlight in the dew,
Blue jewels, half-defiant. Deirdre's gleamed
The milder, it may be. So, side by side,
They stood, and stared Ralph Narron in the face.

"Come in," he said at last, and swung the door
Wider. But Mary ran and grasped their hands,
Those long, white hands, and kissed them on the mouth.
(Callirhoe winced). "Welcome, my dears!" she cried.
"This is your home, if you will have it so.
You favor Brian. Are you tired? Come in!"
And beauty crossed the threshold of the good.

Let us go out to the West, my sister,
Let us go out!
Tho the clouds are grey with doubt,
And the rain may soon be falling.
I can hear the breakers cry
In sorrow to the sky
I can hear the sea-bird calling.

Let us go far to the West, my sister,
Let us go far,
Where the wilder waters are
And the final, unknown danger.
It is dawn to-day in the breast,
With the shadows pointing West
To a sea where the winds are stranger.

Let us go swift to the West, my sister,
Let us go swift!
For the foam-flowers break and drift
On a tide we shall take in sorrow.
Let us set our breasts to the foam,
Making the sea our home
Who shall have no home to-morrow.

Then on the Narrons swept a strange, new life,
And hours undreamt before. Like sea-born things,
Rather than simple maidens, seemed the two.
They had their room, with its great bed of oak,
But shunned it till the night. Fog or no fog,
They ran wind-footed to the reef or cliff,
For all the mighty Mendocinan coast,
With desolate mountains ending in the sea,
Was theirs for heritage. The crystal pools;
The snowy beaches of untrodden sand,
Where the huge breaker hung with emerald throat;
The struggling surf around the stubborn reefs;
The pure quicksilver of a leaning wave
Below the moon; those sentinels on Time,
The dark, titanic redwoods; wraiths of fog
That touched the sun to silver; thrones of cloud
Where no god sat, and azure-spreading winds--
All were their own, whose feet were swift to gain
Those lonely leagues of beauty. So they roamed,
Till that great wave whose foam is dawn and sunset
Ebbed slowly, leaving them the stranded stars,
And night let in the infinite on man.
Three times a day they swam, for that chill sea
Offered no terrors; but they swam alone,
Still uncompanioned, finding crescent sands,
Northward or southward, trackless little arcs
Set in between the paws of every hill,
And took the surf in solitude. Ralph, once,
Would make a third, which curtly was refused.
Sometimes a fisherman or hunter saw
The bright heads lifting on the billow's crest,
But while he gazed, they would not come to land--
Tireless as gulls. "Modesty," Mary said.
"The Gaels were always so. Why, every night
They bolt their door! What is it that they fear
From me, their aunt? They're daft with modesty.
As if I cared!" But when the evening fell
The two wild things came in with the first star,
And for an hour or two would sit in quiet,
Or speak when questioned. For the greater part,
They locked their gaze, and smiled with chiseled lips
Each on the other--smiles that stirred the heart
To dim foreboding. Books they mostly scorned,
And yet they had been schooled by their mad sire:
The wisdom (and the passions) of the Past
Were theirs from childhood. Ralph could call himself
A deist, and might rouse Callirhoe
To some retort, then turn with bitten lip--
Floored with an epigram from Diderot.
He learned in time to leave their souls in peace,
But often he would feel Callirhoe
Staring at him across the lamplight. He,
Meeting her gaze, would wonder at her mood,
Finding a sense of cruelty and fear,
Of exultation, insolence and grief
In those great eyes. He wavered from their stares.

So more and more a dusk of strangeness crept,
An inner shadow cast by inner light,
Around that household. What was in the air?
What bat of evil covered with soft wings
That house of quietudes? Why went the two
Arm around waist forever? Why did each
Turn on the other, early day or night,
The sapphire adoration of her eyes?
It was not natural. It was not right
That two of the same sex should care so much!
Mary saw nothing, in her innocence,
But sometimes Ralph would listen at their door
And hear, like doves far off, the muffled sounds
Of rapture--so it seemed. Could he be sure?
Or was it sorrow for the father dead?
So, day by day, the dim uneasiness
Deepened to irritation, till one night,
Chancing to read "Hesperia," his eyes
Came to the words:
"The bitter delights of the dark, and the feverish,
the furtive caresses."
The tiny shards of the kaleidoscope
Clicked into pattern, to a black mosaic.
He saw them in the heaven of their hell.
He knew. He knew. Now it must soon be said--
That word of terror. But at first he spoke
Of cities, and of travel and old seas,
That should seem new. They would have none of that,
Content, ah! too content, to roam that coast
And hear the ocean and the ocean-wind,
And watch the sunset cities lift in rose.

Fate seats a skeleton at every feast,
Whether she crown the skull with flower or thorn.
So at the last she struck. One autumn night,
Ralph, his pride wounded by Callirhoe,
With some bright rapier of repartee,
Whispered: "Since you will not admit nor fear
Infinite Mind, perhaps you bend the knee
At softer shrines. Shall Sappho have no flame
Upon her altar? Are her girls so cold
That her lascivious feasts are held no more,
Her ritual forgotten? Are the sounds
With which you flood the darkness those of pain
Or of forbidden raptures?" Mary drowsed,
But the two girls drew back like gorgeous snakes
About to strike. The drill had found the nerve!
They rose, in a single impulse, blood a-flame
In face and neck, then, with no spoken word,
Ran to their room. Mary looked up and said:
"Why, what's amiss? They didn't say good night!
You must have hurt them, Ralph." He, furious
Hissed back: "They'll never sleep another night--

Not in my house, the Lesbians!"
" What's that?"
"I said 'the Lesbians.' Is that not plain?"
"You don't--you can't--believe it!"
"Wait awhile.
I'll prove it." So they waited. Half an hour
Revealed its centuries. Then Ralph arose.
"Quietly," he said. They tiptoed to the door
Of the girls' room. Again that sound of doves.
The door was like a seal on mysteries.
Whatever else it hid, it hid delight.
He turned the knob. The trusty bolt was shot.
The moaning ceased. The night was like a tomb.
Then a low laughter made the dark obscene.
They went to their own room without a word.

Let us go down to the sea, my sister,
Let us go down,
Tho at last the wild sea drown
And our hearts be torn asunder.
There is nothing more to fear,
Nor music in my ear
Glad as the sea's slow thunder.

Let us go far on the sea, my sister,
Let us go far,
Follow our evening star
Till the fallen moonlight glitter.
There is nothing more to fear,
And only one word to hear,
For love and the sea are bitter.

Let us take heart of the sea, my sister,
Let us take heart,
Tho it bear our breasts apart,
And we clasp no more forever.
There is nothing more to fear
Nor need of a single tear,
Where grief and desire come never.

Morning, and all its crystal on the world.
Far off, the crying of the gulls. They woke
And Mary hastened to that ardent bed.
'Twas empty. At the earliest hint of dawn
The girls had risen, quiet as two flowers,
And found the usual pathway to the sea.
"They can't put that on me," said Ralph, and snarled!
"The amorous reptiles leave our home today!
Come on: we'll follow them." The dusty trail
Was broken by the print of slender feet.
They followed. For a mile the footsteps ran
Along the cliffs, then sought a little beach

And seemed to end. An early fisherman
Stood on a reef a quarter-mile away.
They went to him. "Your redheads? I saw one.
She must be out to sea a mile by now.
I saw her take the surf at yonder beach,
Alone, and watched her head on every wave,
Until she faded in the distance. Say--
She'll be in China in a week or two!
Who taught those girls to swim? The other one?
No--I saw naught of her." They stood and stared,
Then hurried to the beach. Vacant it seemed.
Then Mary cried: "Ah! look!" Close to the cliff
A body lay. They found Callirhoe,
Clad scantily in her scarlet bathing suit,
With golden-rod still clutched in her left hand:
Two-score of feet above it crowned a ledge.
Ralph knelt, half lifting her. The splendid head
Lolled drunkenly on the torso. She was cold--
Cold as the sea. "She's dead. A broken neck.
And Deirdre?" Mary climbed a jutting crag
And stared far seaward. "No--you'll look in vain.
She's gone forever. Come and help me lift
The other." As he turned, his voice ran shrill:
"Christ, Mary! Christ! Callirhoe's a boy!"

The lone, tremendous Mendocinan coast
Mourned with the world-chord of the surf. Far off
They heard the mindless clamor of the gulls.

*****

NOT MAN APART AT CONTINENT'S END

by Bryan C. Nichols

[This essay won Third Prize in the Robinson Jeffers Centennial Essay Competition, Occidental College, November 14, 1986.]

Continent's End, where violent cosmos is echoed by stone and sea, rock and water striking the perfect balance, is watched and revered by its patron sentinel, perched above in and of his stone pantheon. On the western coast-line cliffside struggle, his spirit still lingers.

Robinson Jeffers was not a man apart from his world, he was a sensory impulse binding mankind with his god. Poetry was not the focus, but rather, a material outlet explicating his appreciation for the dynamics of reality. The universe unfolds itself, contorts, and polymorphs in the beautiful matrix of Jeffers' verse. This poetry engulfs the reader and threatens a startlingly

real vision of our human condition. Man plays an extremely iconoclastic role in Jeffers' lyrics, secondary to the natural elements in his work. His interpretations of man and nature and the dynamics of their unity are what separates Jeffers' genre from that of any other western poet. He seemed dedicated to the re-education of man, from the self-centered over-exaggerations of western society to a more realistic understanding of truth. Truth, unearthed for its sake, despite cost or revelation, to expose the roots of its nature.

Jeffers' pertinence in 1987 is more philosophical than artistic, his poetry being geared toward a conclusive unification of all forces that shape our world. He did not write for an audience, the lyrics tend to illuminate reality rather than distorting it. There was no place for humor in his works, for they presented themselves as blunt reflections of natural reality. The true value of his art is far more immortal than simple creative writing, it lies in the active elements of his character and talent. Each poem reflects a separate facet of Jeffers' world, yet his technical content and symbolism always serve to exploit and unite two central investigations. Primarily, he is a philosopher, dealing with strong biblical and mythologically based examinations of the human condition. He prophesizes as the fatalistic redeemer of men, to combat the romance of western society, to unveil callous truth despite conviction. Secondly, he is a mystic. The universe is his benevolent despot, his God of violent extremes. Both good and evil purpose-fully feed the cycle in an almost apocalyptical balance which equalizes events of birth and death. Finally, he unites his disciplines as a prophet of solidarity, seeking a harmony between his philosophy and mysticism. Dutifully he introduces man to himself and his God, uniting all energies, describing in entirety the dynamics of the cosmos. As a philosopher, a mystic, and a prophet of solidarity, Jeffers offers the knowledge of all human inquiry. He provides the answers to questions which man will always consider of the greatest importance.

The verse found in works such as "Tamar," "Tower Beyond Tragedy," and others reflect the philosophical ideals of many cultures throughout history. Jeffers has altered and untied ancient myth, classical, biblical, Mediterranean and Norse philosophies to provide something like a summary of all important themes. In his lecture delivered to the Library of Congress and later published as THEMES IN MY POEMS (1956), he singles out Death, War, Culture-Cycles, Pantheism, Beauty, The Self-Torturing God, Landscapes, Hawks, and Poetry as his central thematic issues. These are the ancient issues of human philosophy; Landscape acting as revelation, Hawks symbolizing spiritual forces, and Poetry itself as the explication of God's action. What Jeffers has done is poetically investigate topics which have been looked at critically since before recorded history. Yet, rather than adopting ideals and adjusting observations of these themes from philosophical prejudices, he observes the stark reality of each theme and derives his ideals from the compilation of their truths. The philosophies he espoused can be traced to the roots of any ideology he combined in his work. A combination of the classical tragedies, the ritual of early pagan ceremony, and the functions of modern man are all dissected in his lyrics in a manner which not only draws comparisons between

the ideologies, but demonstrates their compositions to be from a single medium. Instead of adapting his own derivations and reasons from basic truths, he just accepts their existence. Jeffers doesn't attempt to construct logical ideals from reality, he presents reality as the religion, truth as its only philosophy. In "Apology for Bad Dreams" the poet describes his works as the gradual education of reality. Jeffers attempts to communicate through his poetry the senselessness of man's inordinate demands for immortality and cosmic centrality, reiterating constantly the cyclic dynamics of reality and the demands of its function. He reaches no "ideals," rather, the real need for birth, pain, bliss, and death that the cosmic cycle requires and fatalistically, will always possess. In "Crumbs or the Loaf," there is a very scriptural explanation of Jeffers' writing technique, the key to presentation of his philosophy. His poetry is compared to the use of Jesus' parables as indirect statements of a greater truth. The philosophical core of poems like "To the House" and "Nova" are stepping stones toward the collective purpose of all his works. Each poem is a stage toward the understanding, the education of reality that Jeffers seeks to achieve. Modern man, who has lost basic truths in the complications of logical explanation, is a difficult pupil on the ideas of simple truth. Jeffers' work is invaluable as a basic guide to our present and future philosophy because he has extracted the undeniable elemental truths of our combined cultural ideals, and made an effort to convey them in pure and understandable expression.

Philosophically, the poet examines the nature of man and reality. When describing the qualities of reality, Jeffers writes of mystic experience and ritual. This mysticism originates from a reverence of his cyclic God, and the violent universe that embodies its omnipresence. Robinson Jeffers reaches beyond the limits of human religious dogma, attempting to respect rather than worship his deity. What he perceives to be real has become his religion, and the changes that its constant evolution entail, his idol. Poetically, this God is paid homage through recognition and understanding. In "Night" Jeffers celebrates death, obliteration, and human finitude exclusively, utilizing the nightfall as a visual pun to describe the mystical divinity of darkness. The poet is attempting to balance the value western society places on goodness and light with an equally powerful transition into the darker side of the cycle. Jeffers is not prompting a clash against the "good forces" of mankind's perception, he is attempting to equalize all forces, recognizing their collective necessity. The purity of darkness is overstated to demonstrate the purity of all natural forces in the balanced cycle. In this aspect, Jeffers acts as a minister of his faith, attempting to remove the sociological blinders from man's experience. The violent rebellion of his themes and verse against accepted patterns of appropriate thought are often just considered blasphemous and rude, critics rarely are able to drop their social defenses and attempt to understand the meanings of his work. Such extreme divergence from "appropriate" ideas is Jeffers' method of "shock treatment," to open the reader's eyes to the reality society has edited out of its ideological scheme. He seems to have made himself responsible for the ignorant rantings of mankind's obsessions of the human race for dominance over nature. The lyrics in "Signpost" and "Roan Stallion" almost reflect a guilt from the blasphemy of others against his God. Jeffers is torn in his duty between allowing the

populace to act as they "naturally" will, and striving to lead them to see a life of unity and acceptance of the pain and death of existence. By elaborating on the spirit of the landscape and the mystic divinity of some social taboos, the poet tries to at least redirect his reader's perspective. He does not demand worship of the violent, essential cycle which is his Lord, only an understanding of some truths which recognize this cycle. His mystic love for the cosmic God is significant to mankind because its expression in poetry recognizes important elements of reality western society has been taught to suppress.

The separate revelations of philosophical and mystical elements in his lyrics are intensified in significance by his ability to functionally unite the two. Jeffers' world is cyclic in every dimension regenerating itself and every member of its being. He includes man in the process as a "sensory organ of God." The natural world, typically represented by the ocean, earth, stone, or the cosmos, is the life force and man is its emotional extension. Basic awareness of origin and a re-establishment of natural bonds are predominant throughout his works. In "The Answer," Jeffers explains a return to these earthbound values and healing through a oneness with the workings of the world. Similar themes can be found in "Return," where his mysticism and philosophy integrate into a prophecy of solidarity. He has extracted the common truths from the cultures of mankind, and represented this element as a stone, a pure elemental statement of wholeness. The landscape is his god, a still-life of the violent cycle performed by cosmos and earth. In the final stage of his poetry he attempts to unite the two, stone and mother earth, describing a oneness in their similar origin and destiny. This is the most significant function of his lyrics, a coupling of both his philosophical and mystical realms. Their unity describes a wholeness characteristic to both man and nature, a working description of how mankind fits into the dynamics of the cosmos.

Jeffers has dedicated his work to forces pertinent in this age and for all time. The focus of his labors concentrates on philosophical significance rather than artistic merit, their nature dictates a certain timelessness and exclusivity among literary works. His statements go beyond just social commentary, they are universal truths which transcend time and cultural limitations. As men struggle for immortality, invulnerability, and security, Jeffers' works sing of integration into the cycle of cosmic metamorphosis and a re-establishment of natural bonds with the earth. Mankind asks questions concerning a relative position and importance in the universe, and Jeffers has the answers. Yet, these are not the answers men search for. They seek solutions which will allow complete dominance and superiority over their world and universe. The lyrics of Jeffers are a compilation of truths tested and ignored by struggling mankind year after year, culture after culture. The reality of his poetry is so pure that it is difficult to digest, and he has tried to accommodate his disciples with bite-sized stepwise philosophy. Yet, western society has pushed so hard so long to find the "answer" that we have developed systems of thinking unable to grasp even the question. A slow process of realization is in the workings of the universe, perhaps a hope. Not a hope for immortality through conquering science or politics, but maybe an immortality based in mystical continuity. A possibility that men will stop wasting their lives trying to escape death, fearing the nature of their origin and destiny. A possibility that some of Jeffers' insight will feed a world hungry for epiphany.

It is difficult to view the true nature of our human condition through Jeffers' curt lyrics. A lengthy consideration of any of his work will reveal the interworkings of man and the cosmos which is his God. What we see through his eyes we have been trained to fear. It is this fear which restricts our progress. A philosophical meaning of all truths combined with a mystic reverence for a violent, indifferent, too real God. It has taken more than half a century to recognize his poems as being at all valuable, and their importance as philosophical literature has been long neglected. His pertinence lies in the philosophical revelations of his work, a complete explication of all mankind's inquiries. These truths will stand as self--evident, their understanding tragically belated, their importance truly appreciated only when mankind measures progress by insight, not hindsight.

*****